



News from

Congressman Ron Kind

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S THIRD
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

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Kind Submits Comment on CCP Alternative E for Upper Miss. River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge *Applauds CCP Process, Emphasizes Consensus, Proposes Voluntary Compliance*

Washington, DC –U.S. Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI) registered his comments today on Alternative E of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge in a letter he sent to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) officials. Rep. Kind, who successfully advocated for a 60-day public comment period for Alternative E, underlined the importance of process and public feedback, reviewed his efforts to build consensus and offered recommendations for consideration in drafting the final plan.

Excerpts from the letter below. Full letter available at www.house.gov/kind.

Touching on a theme he has emphasized throughout the CCP process, Kind begins the letter stating the importance of consensus building and garnering public support for a plan that best manages the large, multi-use resource. Kind states that “I and my staff have taken a balanced approach, attending and speaking at various public meetings and conducting numerous meetings ourselves in an effort to develop a consensus CCP that addresses the refuge’s short-term and long-term needs and maintains the essential public-private partnerships in managing this important resource.”

In the letter, Kind commends the agency “for listening and considering more than two thousand comments and holding various public listening sessions” and its “openness to public opinion and willingness to adjust the plan in light of public input.”

Kind, who grew up along the Mississippi, describes his personal investment in the CCP and the future of the refuge, “...as someone who has grown up near the refuge and enjoyed the many wonders of the Mississippi River, I am proud to call myself a ‘river rat.’ Recognizing that a healthy river system is important, not only to our region’s economy, but to our quality of life, I have worked consistently to promote land conservation and strengthen river habitat in the refuge.”

The FWS recently named Kind *2006 Fisheries and Habitat Conservation Legislator of the Year* for his outstanding contribution to fisheries and wildlife habitat conservation. He also scored a 100 percent rating from the League of Conservation Voters for 2005 and was honored in February by the Teaming with Wildlife Coalition on behalf of more than 3,000 groups working to preserve wildlife and vital habitat.

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Kind continues, “While I commend your agency efforts in developing Alternative E, it is my hope that any final CCP will take the following into consideration: strengthening efforts to reduce sedimentation, enhance habitat restoration and combat invasive species; enhancing public-private partnerships; working with appropriate Wisconsin agencies in developing regulations; maintaining access for all users; and adopting voluntary compliance in regards to navigation.”

On his proposed voluntary compliance idea, Kind states, “To ensure adoption of the final CCP, FWS must recognize existing state laws regarding the regulation of various means of navigation. Since these proposed “closed areas” have caused alarm by some state officials, I strongly encourage your department to adopt “voluntary compliance” methods in place of the more restrictive slow, no-wake areas, electric motor areas and closed areas concept and then monitor the impact at these areas on other users and wildlife.”

The letter ends by once again recognizing the FWS for their efforts and acknowledges the challenge of managing a large, multi-use resource such as the river. Kind concludes, “It is clear that many individuals and groups care passionately about its management. It is equally clear that no final plan can be all things to all people, so we all must recognize that it has to balance the needs of the various users as well as wildlife.”